

State of Rhode Island
Department of Administration

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Office of Accounts and Control

TO: Chief Financial Officers
State Departments and Agencies

DATE: October 19, 2001

FROM: Lawrence C. Franklin, Jr., State Controller

SUBJECT: USE OF TELEPHONES, CELL PHONES, PAGERS AND CALLING CARDS

Procedural Handbook Section A-54, regarding the use of telephones, cellular phones, pagers, and calling cards, is hereby promulgated and is attached. Several elements of this policy are contained in Executive Order 95-7, issued by Governor Lincoln Almond on March 3, 1995.

You should make this policy available to all staff members within your department. Please contact me at 222-6731 or via e-mail (LarryF@gw.doa.state.ri.us) with any questions concerning this subject matter.

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CFO:02-20

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTS AND CONTROL

SECTION
ACCOUNTING

POLICY NUMBER
A-54

POLICY
**USE OF TELEPHONES, CELL PHONES,
PAGERS AND CALLING CARDS**

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1. **PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS**

The use of the State's land-based telephone system, cellular phones or pagers for personal calls, displaces business calls. When excessive time is spent on personal calls the State's business goals and purposes are compromised. These policies and procedures apply to employees' use of any of these State provided telecommunication devices, and regulate employees' use of state owned cellular phones, pagers, and calling cards as well as their use of personal cellular phones and pagers during work hours. Employees are expected to take care of their personal business during non-working hours. Accordingly, personal phone calls that are not of an emergency nature must be held to a minimum and must not interfere with the State's business. Employees are required to reimburse the State for the full cost of all long distance and toll calls, cellular phone calls and calling card telephone calls of a personal nature.

2. **CELLULAR PHONES, PAGERS AND CALLING CARDS**

Certain State employees may be provided with state-owned (or rented) cellular phones and/or pagers or calling cards if the business goals and purposes of the State will be furthered. Also, some employees maybe provided with state-paid telephone service at their homes if needed. Some state employees may also own personal cellular phones and/or pagers or calling cards. Accordingly, the following policies and procedures regulate employees' use of state owned cellular phones, pagers and calling cards, as well as their use of personal cellular phones and pagers during work hours.

3. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

3.1 State-Owned Cellular Phones, Pagers and Calling Cards

Employees who are issued state-owned cellular phones and/or pagers are required to keep the units turned on and the batteries charged, and must carry them at all times when on duty or on call.

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Employees must reimburse the State for all non-business phone calls. On a monthly basis, the State will provide each employee who has been issued a state-owned cellular phone, pager or calling card, a copy of his/her individual phone bill. The employee will be required to identify all non-business phone calls, and must reimburse the State for the total cost of all non-business phone calls.

Employees must return any state-owned cellular phones and/or pagers at the request of their supervisors or when their employment is terminated.

3.2 Personal Cellular Phones and Pagers

Using personal cellular phones or responding to personal pagers during work hours may adversely affect your job performance and the State's business goals and purposes. Therefore, state employees are permitted to use personal cellular phones and/or pagers while at work on a limited basis to avoid interference with the performance of his or her job functions.

If an employee uses a personal cellular phone in the performance of his or her job function, they may seek reimbursement for such usage from the state. The rates of reimbursement are calculated as in paragraph 5.2.

4. **RESIDENTIAL TELEPHONE SERVICE**

Certain state employees may be provided with state-paid telephone service at their homes to further the business purpose and goals of the state.

The Chief Information Officer must approve residential telephone service pursuant to a policy memorandum dated September 22, 1997.

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5. **REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES**

5.1 From Employees

No later than fifteen days after the end of each billing cycle, the employee shall review the bill(s) for each type of telecommunication device or service used by him/her during the billing cycle and mark his/her personal calls.

Most cellular phone billing plans offer an established number of minutes of usage during a billing period for one monthly fee. A higher per minute rate is charged if the actual number of minutes of usage exceeds the established allotment of time under the particular billing plan.

The following examples assume the following facts. The calling plan allots 500 minutes of calls per billing period at a cost of \$49.99 per billing period. Any minutes in excess of 500 are billed at \$0.30 per minute.

Any personal calls made during a billing period will be reimbursed at the higher per minute rate charged by the billing plan. It is presumed that the personal calls made during the billing period allotted minutes displaced business calls, therefore, the employee will have to reimburse the state at the higher rate. This policy will apply irrespective of the fact that the personal usage minutes during the billing period in question was less than, equal to or more than the total number of excess minutes.

EXAMPLE: An employee uses 100 minutes of the allotted 500 for personal use, but total usage for the same billing period does not exceed the 500 minutes. The employee should reimburse the state for the 100 minutes of personal use at the rate of \$0.30 per minute.

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EXAMPLE: An employee uses 100 minutes of the allotted 500 for personal use, and total usage of 550 minutes for the same billing period exceeds the 500 minutes by 50 minutes. The employee should reimburse the state for the 100 minutes of personal use at the rate of \$0.30 per minute.

For other types of billing or rate plans, the employee must reimburse the State for the actual total amount billed for non-business calls.

He/she shall complete the telecommunications reimbursement report and shall issue a check or money order, payable to "General Treasurer, State of R.I.," for the sum total of personal calls, including applicable taxes, fees and surcharges appearing on the bills reviewed to the business office of his/her department/agency. The business office shall deposit all reimbursements as expenditure credits against the account and budget code that originally incurred the charges.

5.2 To Employees

The employee shall review the bill(s) for personal telecommunication devices and mark his/her business calls. The employee shall attach whatever certification and explanation of each call that his/her business office may require. The business office will prepare the payment voucher and submit it to the Office of Accounts and Control for payment.

Any business calls made during a billing period will be reimbursed to the employee by dividing the total allotted minutes into the billing period rate irrespective of the fact that business usage minutes caused the allotted minutes to be exceeded. The bases for this policy are the following presumptions. One, use of a personal cell phone for business calls is voluntary by the employee. Two, that such voluntary usage will be de minimis. (The per minute rate for a plan that allots a total of 500 minutes of calls per billing period at a cost of \$49.99 per billing period would be \$0.10 per minute.)

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6. **ENFORCEMENT**

Any employee who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action. Repeated or continued violation of this policy may lead to termination of employment.
